



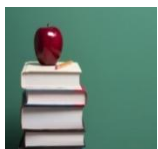
# School Programs USDA Foods Update

Volume 14, Issue 1, October 2009

## What's New in USDA's Food Distribution Program for Schools?

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### BACK TO SCHOOL

Welcome back! We hope everyone had a great summer, and we wish everyone a successful 2009-2010 school year. Like the leaves change in fall, we have made some changes. With schools back in session, this is a perfect time to provide you with an update on all the new products and projects that USDA FNS has been working on, in our effort to help schools meet the nutritional needs of their students and to help in the President's challenge to End Childhood Hunger by 2015.

### COMMODITY FORECAST

**All Canned Vegetables:** In July 2009, USDA started purchasing only low-sodium canned vegetables for our school programs. The new sodium level will not exceed 140 mg per ½ cup serving.

**Corn:** Some of the early low-sodium canned corn deliveries were delayed, but we expect to purchase all remaining orders for SY 2010. Corn producers harvested a larger than expected crop, so we purchased more canned and frozen corn for January-June 2010 delivery.

**Peaches:** Clingstone and freestone peach crop production was plentiful again. The overall quality of the crop is exceptional this year. We also purchased additional quantities of canned clingstone peaches and frozen freestone peaches for January-June 2010 delivery.

**Beef and Pork Products:** Due to limited FY 2009 funds, we've delayed some beef and pork purchases to November and later delivery. Beef prices have remained stable, and we expect to purchase all remaining SY 2010 orders. We also expect to purchase all the pork products on order, and we anticipate low prices and plentiful supplies for the remainder of the school year.

**Fish:** USDA successfully purchased tuna ordered for delivery early this school year. However, the tsunami on American Samoa has

disrupted production. We anticipate delivery delays and may need to cancel orders that would be delivered later this school year. We are looking into the possibility of offering bulk pollock for further processing. We anticipate it will be available for a test buy later this school year.

**Poultry Products:** We expect to purchase all remaining SY 2010 orders. In SY 2011, USDA will be changing the specification for batter-breaded chicken to reduce the fat and sodium content.

**Whole-Grain Products:** USDA began a pilot project last school year to test whole-wheat pancakes and tortillas in schools. Because of the success of the pilot, these products have been offered for January-June 2010 deliveries and will be available to schools in SY 2011. These items will increase the list of already available whole-grain products to schools: whole-grain rotini, spaghetti, and macaroni; rolled oats; brown rice; long-grain, parboiled brown rice; whole, dry kernel yellow corn (for processing only); and whole-wheat flour.

**Cheese:** Prices for cheese have been low, which has helped us purchase more under the 2009 long term contract. Lower prices are allowing you to get more for your entitlement dollars so you may have an opportunity to order additional USDA Foods for delivery later this school year. Mozzarella cheese will have a lower salt level for new purchases in Calendar Year 2010. The lower salt levels will translate into a sodium reduction of about 15 percent. Instead of approximately 240 mg sodium per 1 ounce serving, the new cheese will contain 130-175 mg per 1 ounce serving.

## BONUS OFFERINGS - SY 2010

Bonus surplus removal and price support products purchased thus far for Child Nutrition Programs in SY 2010 to support specific markets in need include:

- Walnuts
- Blueberries
- Pork roast
- Ham, 97 percent lean
- Turkey—roast, delis, and bulk breast meat
- UHT milk
- Reduced-fat cheeses



## FRESH CUT SLICED APPLES PILOT PROJECT: ACCEPTABILITY SURVEY RESULTS

Last Spring, USDA initiated a pilot project to purchase and deliver fresh cut sliced apples packaged in 2 ounce pouches to schools in five States: California, New York, Michigan, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. The apples have a 14 day shelf life. Schools completed acceptability surveys on factors that included the appearance, flavor, and texture of the apples, and students' overall satisfaction with the apples. Other survey factors focused on the condition of the apples when received and the adequacy of the shelf life.

The survey results will assist USDA with offering more high quality fresh fruits and vegetables to schools, while ensuring that the products may be held and served safely.

USDA is expanding the pilot in SY 2010 to include more States, allow schools to order fresh sliced apples for January- June 2010 deliveries, and purchase baby carrots in single-serve bags for SY 2010 ordering.



## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) FRESH PROGRAM

The DoD Fresh Program is a cooperative effort between USDA and DoD to supply more than

60 types of fresh fruits and vegetables to schools, paid for with entitlement funds. These purchases increased from \$4 million in SY 1995 to over \$50 million in SY 2009.

We enjoyed those great summer fruits and vegetables, but as the season changes, so do our choices.

DoD has informed us that new crop apples have already started. Late fall and early winter are great times to try new varieties.

Your choices will expand with new items such as tangerines, tangelos, and sweet seedless navel oranges. Cool weather crops such as collards, kale, and cauliflower are reaching their peak, and kiwi should be back on the order guides around November.

**Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Ordering and Receipting System (FFAVORS):** DoD wants us to remind participating schools that passwords may have expired over the summer, and to contact your Customer Representative for password issues or for any questions about the system. They also want to remind schools to remember to go back into FFAVORS after your delivery has arrived and enter a "receipt" for that order. The few minutes that it takes to go into "Edit Receipts", will ensure correct billing and funds tracking.

**Customer Surveys:** DoD is inviting participating schools to complete a produce survey. The survey link can be found at <http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/produce/prodsurv.asp>.

The DoDAAC is the six-digit code associated with your school, such as YPA001. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact your Customer Representative. DoD's goal to its customers continues to be the provider of the highest quality produce, and they want to thank all participants in the DoD Fresh Program for their support.



## WEB BASED SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (WBSCM) UPDATE

FNS, along with Agricultural Marketing Service, Farm Service Agency, Foreign Agricultural Service, and the U.S. Agency for International Development are building one integrated system to support domestic and international food assistance programs. This new system (WBSCM) will replace the Processed Commodities Inventory Management System and the Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS). ECOS is currently used by State Agencies and some schools to place orders for USDA Foods, to manage entitlement spending, to submit complaints, and to receive product information for recalls. WBSCM will be used for all supply chain management activities from the creation of orders from our recipients (both domestic and international) to processing bids and tracking funding, order status, commodity distribution, and product receipts.

WBSCM will go live in 2010. States have been asked to submit orders earlier than usual in the existing system (ECOS), to ensure timely processing of SY 2011 orders.

View WBSCM updates on our Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/WBSCM/default.htm>.



## USDA FOODS COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE

Our Web site includes a collection of valuable resources to assist School Nutrition Professionals to educate students, school staff, and the community about the healthy and nutritious contributions that USDA Foods provide to school meal programs.

We have recently updated some of our materials and invite you to view and download them by visiting

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/healthy/Toolkit.htm>.

USDA Foods meet high safety standards, are 100 percent American grown, keep pace with current nutrition and health advancements, and support the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid*.

USDA values its partnership with school nutrition professionals. By sharing with others the improvements that have been made to USDA Foods, and how they contribute to school meal programs, we can dispel myths and negative perceptions about USDA Foods.

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### “USDA Foods, America’s Finest” Video



Learn how USDA helps provide high quality and nutritious foods to schools. This video captures the early days when donated surplus food helped feed a nation in the middle of a severe depression and how today’s USDA Foods Program continues to provide nutrition assistance across the country. Throughout the video, school nutrition professionals and USDA professionals share their knowledge and experience with USDA Foods. You can view or download this video at

[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/healthy/Toolkit.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/healthy/Toolkit.htm).

***This video has been approved to provide 1.0 CEU towards maintaining or earning your SNA certification or credential.***

USDA has recently added a shortened version of the “USDA Foods, America’s Finest” video. This 4.5 minute video is a brief documentary about the healthy attributes and nutritious contributions USDA Foods make to the NSLP.



A video companion guide has been created to help Child Nutrition Professionals educate their customers and the educational community about USDA Foods and how they benefit school meals. Suggested viewing venues and speaking points are offered as part of the companion guide. Both of these resources can also be found in our USDA Foods Toolkit at the link above.

### Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) – Food Safety Videos

The IFT has produced a series of videos, “Understanding Food Safety and Toxicology.” The eight video segments, each under three minutes in length, address different topics of food safety, such as “Basic Principles of Toxicology,” “Chemical Risks in Food,” “How Scientists Assess Food Safety Risks,” and “Eating a Balanced Diet.” One video explains how consumers today are free to make many food choices, including purchasing organic food if they are concerned about chemicals. Whether they choose organically grown or conventionally produced food, the goal should be to eat a balanced diet. To view the videos, visit <http://www.monkeysee.com/play/13771-basics-of-food-toxicology>.



## HOLDS AND RECALLS: THE IMPORTANCE OF TRACKING FOOD

Holds and recalls are valuable because they remove products that have quality problems or may cause harm. It is critical to be able to track food within a school or school district so that a suspect food can be located quickly. Think of traceability as a chain. Each piece of information must be intact so it can link a product from its original source to your schools.

The most important pieces of information for identifying specific USDA Foods products are the contract and delivery order numbers. These numbers can be found on the boxes or case packaging, but are not usually found on the individual units within a case. If the product is removed from the original case at the school district level or at individual schools, the identity of the product may be lost.

To be prepared for a hold or recall, it is critical that you use a method or system for maintaining identifying numbers when you remove products from their original packaging. This could be as simple as writing the contract and delivery order numbers on a blank label and sticking it on each product unit. Just imagine for a moment the worst case: a product you received is recalled and is suspected of being contaminated. This product needs to be removed immediately from the food supply. Could you locate the product quickly and easily in your facility? Most recalls in the NSLP are not the result of imminent food safety dangers. But, we should always be prepared for any emergency situation. At the very least, being able to track food products allows you to identify and locate them quickly and promotes timely, accurate replacement and/or reimbursement should a hold or recall occur.

## FRESH PRODUCE SAFETY FOR SCHOOLS

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet, and introducing children to them in

schools may help to improve their present and future health. It's important to handle fresh produce safely to reduce the risks of foodborne illness.

The following tips will help minimize the chance of cross-contamination of produce in your programs. These tips are part of the farm to fork continuum.

### Receiving

- Check produce for freshness by randomly examining the entire contents of a box rather than just the items on the top. If a product does not meet your standards of freshness, refuse to accept it.
- Accept only produce that is not bruised or damaged.
- When selecting fresh-cut produce—such as apple slices or bagged mixed salad greens—choose or accept only those items that have been kept cool. Use a food thermometer to ensure the temperature is 41°F or lower upon delivery.

### Clean Produce

- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly with cold running water—never in standing water—before serving.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- Produce labeled as pre-washed can be used without further washing.

### Clean Equipment and Hands

- Wash, rinse, sanitize, and air dry all food-contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils including cutting boards, knives, countertops, and sinks before and after use.
- Wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm running water before and after handling fresh produce.



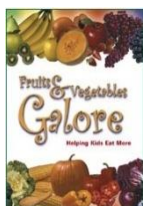
### Storage

- Separate fresh produce from other refrigerated foods in refrigeration units. Cover and store washed cut produce above

unwashed, uncut fresh produce. Store all produce off the floor.

- Mark each item with the date it was received and practice First-In, First-Out inventory management methods.
- Discard wilted or discolored product immediately.
- Always store cut fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator.

## OTHER RESOURCES



***Fruits & Vegetables Galore*** is a tool for school foodservice professionals packed with tips on planning, purchasing, protecting, preparing, presenting, and promoting fruits and vegetables:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/TN/Resources/fv\\_galore.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/TN/Resources/fv_galore.html)



**Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Handbook:**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FFVP/Resources/FFVPhandbookFINAL.pdf>



**FDA's Safe Handling of Raw Produce and Fresh-Squeezed Fruit and Vegetable Juices:**

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prodsafe.html>

## DID YOU KNOW?

**...USDA Foods are available to any school that participates in a USDA school meal program.** USDA Foods account for 15 to 20 percent of the food in school nutrition programs. The remaining 80 to 85 percent of food is selected and bought by schools or State agencies from commercial suppliers. USDA also provides food to other nutrition assistance programs including emergency food relief to people who experience the effects of natural disasters.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK!

Please let us know if you have any USDA Foods related issues that you would like addressed in future editions of the School Programs USDA Foods Update. If you have any questions or comments on our products or services, please email them directly to our Program Support Branch at [fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov](mailto:fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov).

You can also write to the Food Distribution Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 508, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.

## ACRONYM LIST

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
DoD	Department of Defense
ECOS	Electronic Commodity Ordering System
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service
FDD	Food Distribution Division
FFAVORS	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Ordering and Receipting System
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FSA	Farm Service Agency
IFT	Institute of Food Technologists
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
SNA	School Nutrition Association
PCIMS	Processed Commodities Inventory Management System
TAMU	Texas A&M University
UAT	User Acceptance Testing
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WBSCM	Web Based Supply Chain Management

***Prepared by: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Food Distribution Division and the Food Safety Unit.***